

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

S E C R E T KUWAIT 001227

SIPDIS

STATE FOR D, NEA, NEA/ARP, NEA/IR, NEA/NGA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/13/2014

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [KU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: (C) SCENESETTER: DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE VISIT

Classified By: CDA FRANK URBANCIC; REASON 1.4 (D)

1. (C) Mr. Secretary, Welcome to Kuwait. Your visit will be an excellent opportunity to continue the high-level engagement the Kuwaitis crave, building on the excellent reception the Defense Minister and Foreign Minister received in Washington two weeks ago. We have requested meetings with the Prime Minister, the Defense Minister, and the Foreign Minister. The GOK is committed to its strategic partnership with the United States. It understands that we continue to pay a price in blood to bring about the peaceful, stable, prosperous Iraq that it wants and needs on its border. But many Kuwaitis, including the leadership, were rattled by recent events in Fallujah and Najaf that they feared suggested Iraq might be spinning out of control. We can never emphasize to our Kuwaiti partners too much that the United States is committed to staying the course in Iraq, that we have a viable plan and are making progress, and that the GOK is a vital member of the winning team.

2. (C) The liberation of Iraqi Shiites increased the assertiveness of Kuwait's own Shia minority (about a third of the citizenry), incensing hardline Kuwaiti Sunnis. Images of the fighting in Fallujah galvanized some Sunnis into forming a "popular-parliamentary" group "to support the Iraqi people against the American occupation." The spokesman of the Salafi Movement (which holds only three of 50 seats in the National Assembly) called publicly for moral and material support to defeat the US "enemy." Sunnis and Shiites have lived amicably in recent years, but potential for tension has risen sufficiently of late to prompt Prime Minister Shaykh Sabah al-Ahmed to hold a round of meetings with Sunni, Shia, tribal, and other political leaders as well as editors-in-chief of local newspapers, warning that sectarianism will not be tolerated. Reports indicate he was sternest with the Shia, while promising to meet some of their demands for more equitable treatment.

3. (S) While still under control for the time being, the greatest security threat we perceive in Kuwait now is from the few but dedicated Sunni extremists. Some of them are providing material support to anti-American elements in Iraq with impunity, as they so far cannot be convicted of breaking any Kuwaiti law. You discussed counter-terrorism cooperation with Foreign Minister Shaykh Dr. Mohammed al-Sabah during his visit this month. It would be useful for you to reinforce with the Prime Minister the need for a crackdown on Sunni extremists.

4. (C) The AIK fuel issue remains unresolved, but the fuel continues to flow. Encouragingly, the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces (whose budget takes the hit in the meantime) has approved deployment of an additional AC-130 aircraft for counter-insurgency operations; earlier, he had been unwilling to approve further deployments pending resolution of the AIK fuel issue.

5. (C) The GOK bureaucracy is trying to charge port fees for US military shipping related to OIF, going back to April 2003. The total could reach \$200 million. We are working with higher levels of the Government to ensure that this demand will be withdrawn. The Defense Cooperation Agreement exempts us from such charges, but it is a classified document, therefore most of the bureaucracy is unaware of its provisions. Its release to Islamists in parliament could only fuel their discontent.

6. (C) We expect Kuwait will not move without further goading on bringing the Article 98 agreement into force, simply because a basic tenet of its foreign policy is to avoid antagonizing any major power if possible, and the Europeans remain vocally opposed.

7. (U) On the positive side, the Council created under the bilateral Trade and Investment Framework Agreement meets for the first time in Washington on May 6-7.

8. (U) Embassy Kuwait remains heavily involved in supporting the Iraq mission, and anticipates a sharp increase in the workload associated with the transition from CPA to Embassy Baghdad.

URBANCIC